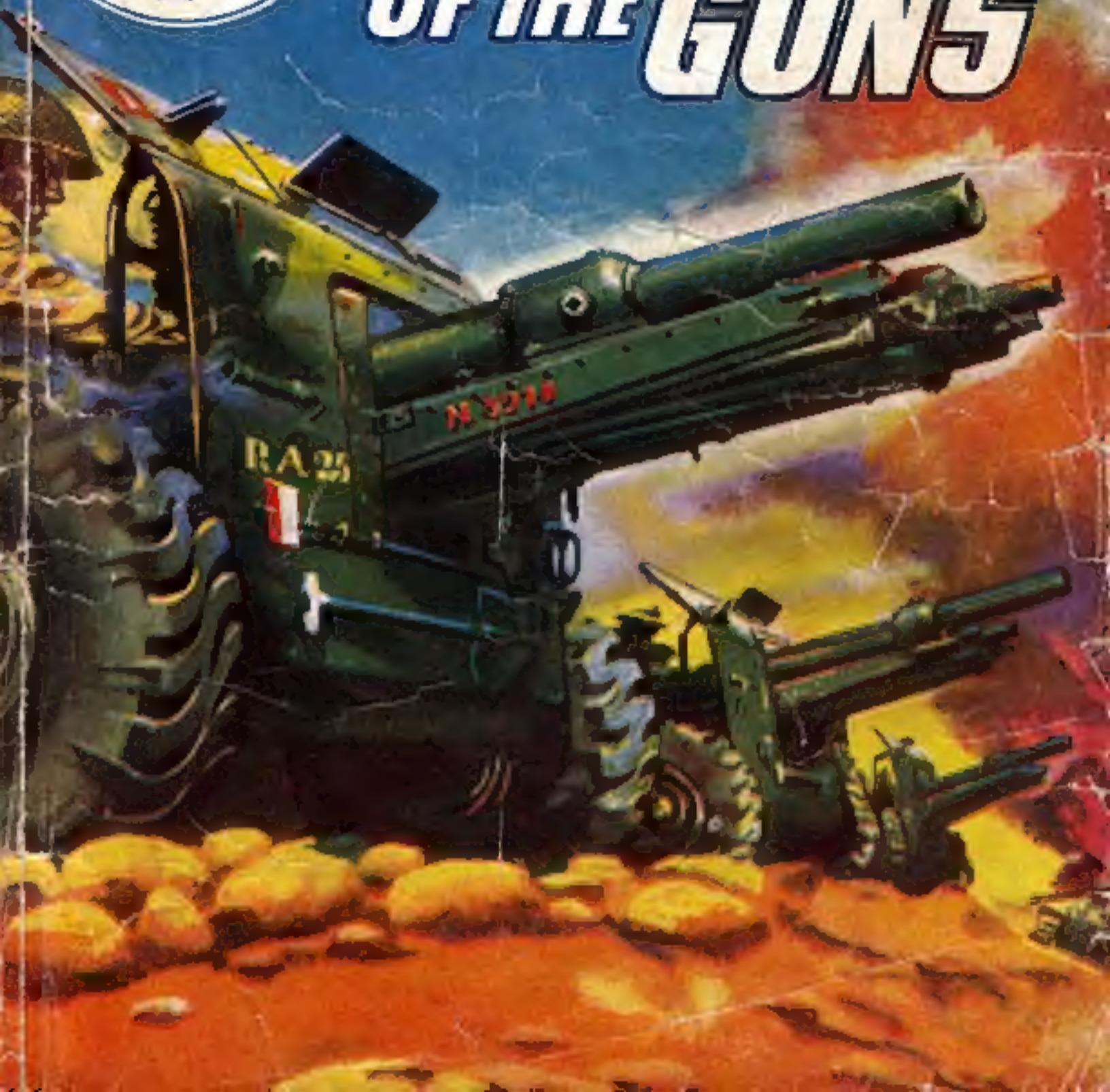


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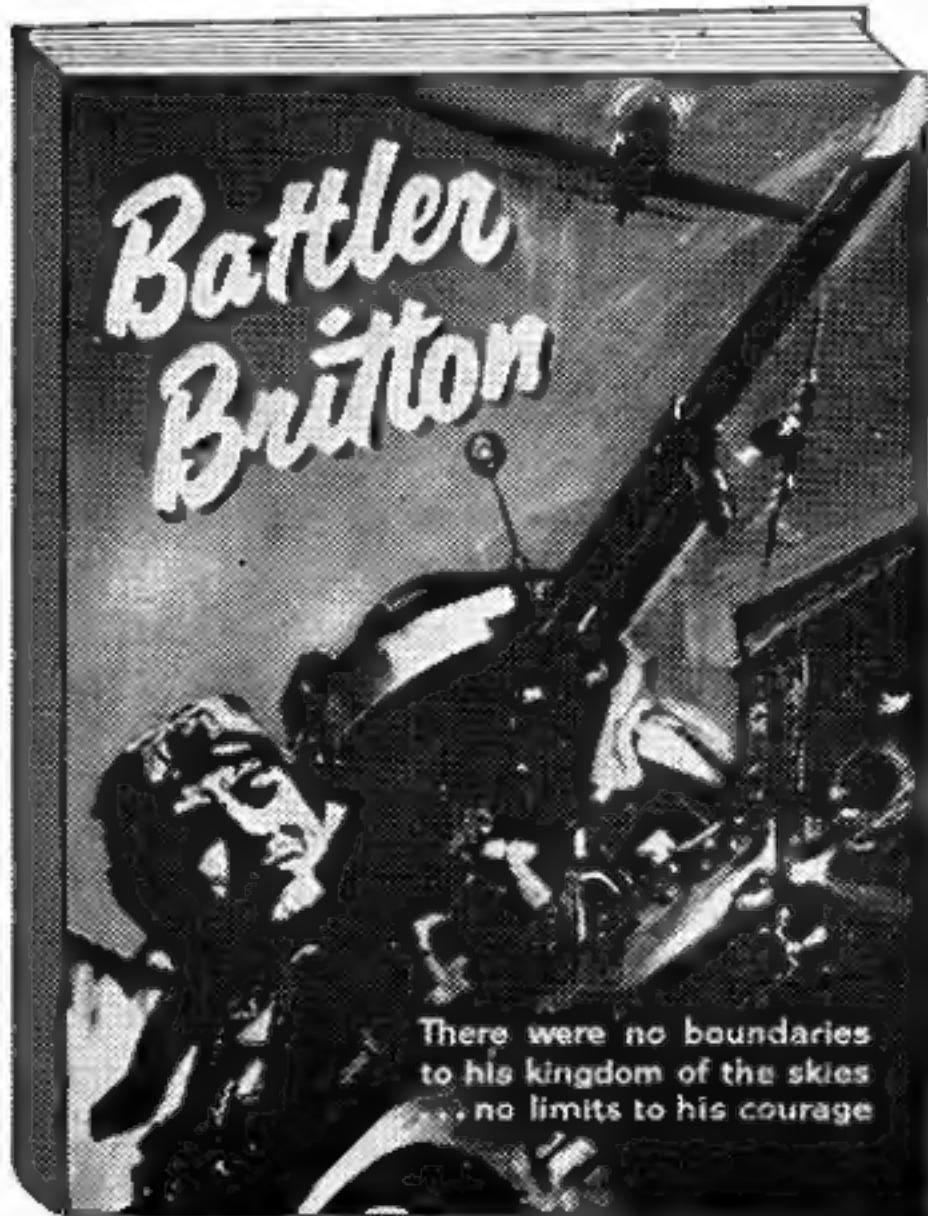
# **THE VOICE OF THE GUNS**



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# THE VOICE *of the* GUNS

IN 1941, THE FIERCE TIDE OF WAR EBBED AND FLOWED ACROSS THE BARREN WASTES OF THE WESTERN DESERT. AS THE GERMAN AFRICA KORPS GRAPPLED WITH THE SMALLER BUT INDOMITABLE EIGHTH ARMY, THE GERMAN PANZERS SOON LEARNED TO FEAR ONE WEAPON IN PARTICULAR . . . THE TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER GUN!



# Chapter 1. OPEN SIGHTS

SMALL 'FLYING COLUMNS' OF TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER'S RANGED THE DESERT, WREAKING DESTRUCTION AMONGST ROMMEL'S TANKS . . .



ROMMEL'S FURY KNEW NO BOUNDS WHEN HE LEARNED THAT STILL MORE OF HIS PANZERS HAD FALLEN TO THE 'GIPSY GUNS', AS HE NAMED THE 25-POUNDERS.



# The Voice of the Guns

2

THE GERMAN COMMANDER'S EYES HARDENED. THESE IMPUDENT GUNNERS MUST BE TAUGHT A SHARP LESSON . . .

THIS FLYING COLUMN  
MUST BE DESTROYED.  
**AT ALL COSTS!**  
NOW, GENTLEMEN,  
THIS IS WHAT YOU  
WILL DO . . .



MEANWHILE, BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF THE PLANS THAT THE "DESERT FOX" WAS MAKING FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION, THE JUBILANT BRITISH GUNNERS WERE KEEPING A RENDEZVOUS WITH A SUPPLY TRUCK.

COME ON, ME LUCKY LADS . . .  
SOONER IT'S DONE THE SOONER  
YOU GET YOUR MAIL . . .  
HELLO, WHO'S THIS ?



I BROUGHT UP  
A REPLACEMENT,  
SAR' MAJOR . . .  
LANCE-BOMBARDIER  
LEASON-BLOOMIN'  
-JOYCE - ETON,  
'ARROW, OXFORD,  
CAMBRIDGE  
SANDHURST . . .  
THE LOT!

THE NEW ARRIVAL, TIM LEASON-JOYCE, REDDENED AT THE DRIVER'S MOCKING INTRODUCTION . . . AND AT THE SMILE IT BROUGHT TO THE FACE OF SERGEANT-MAJOR RIDLEY. HE HAD ALREADY LEARNED THAT A PUBLIC-SCHOOL BACKGROUND, AN OXFORD ACCENT AND A DOUBLE-BARRELLED NAME TOOK SOME LIVING DOWN WHEN YOU WERE IN THE RANKS.

WELCOME TO THE DESERT.  
JOYCE, YOU'LL FIND IT  
A BIT WARMER  
THAN 'ARROW!'



IT'S LEASON-JOYCE, ACTUALLY.  
SIR... AND I WENT TO  
WINCHESTER  
NOT HARROW!

THE HARD-BITTEN SERGEANT-MAJOR, A REGULAR OF MANY YEARS' SERVICE, WAS TOUCHY ABOUT HIS AITCHES! A BORN SOLDIER, LACK OF POLISH AND EDUCATION HAD KEPT HIM FROM A COMMISSION AND THE THOUGHT THAT TIM WAS SNEERING AT HIM MADE HIM SEETHE INWARDLY.



RIGHT, LEASON-JOYCE - WHEREVER YOU WENT TO SCHOOL - WE MUCK IN HERE REGARDLESS OF RANK - SO GET YOUR KIT OFF AND HELP UNLOAD THAT TRUCK!

YES  
SIR!



FOR A BRIEF MOMENT THE TWO STARED AT EACH OTHER WITH AN INSTANT DISLIKE.

GIVE TYPES LIKE THAT A BIT OF POWER AND THEY'RE LITTLE HITLERS AT ONCE!



PUBLIC SCHOOLBOY RANKERS . . . ALL THEY CAN DO IS SNEER!

RED-FACED TIM DOUBLED OVER TO WHERE THE GRINNING GUNNERS WERE UNLOADING THE TRUCK: THEY HAD HEARD EVERYTHING . . . AND THE NEW ARRIVAL RECEIVED A RIBALD GREETING . . .

WELCOME TO THE DESERT,  
ME LORD! IF WE'D  
KNOWN YOU WAS  
COMING, WE'D 'AVE  
'AD IT DUSTED!

I SAY, OLD CHAP,  
JOLLY NICE TO  
SEE YOU, WHAT?

THE NEXT MINUTE THE  
JOKERS GOT A SHOCK!

WOTCHER, ME OL'  
CHINAS! PLEASED  
TER MEETCHER!

OW!  
LEGO!

# The Voice of the Guns

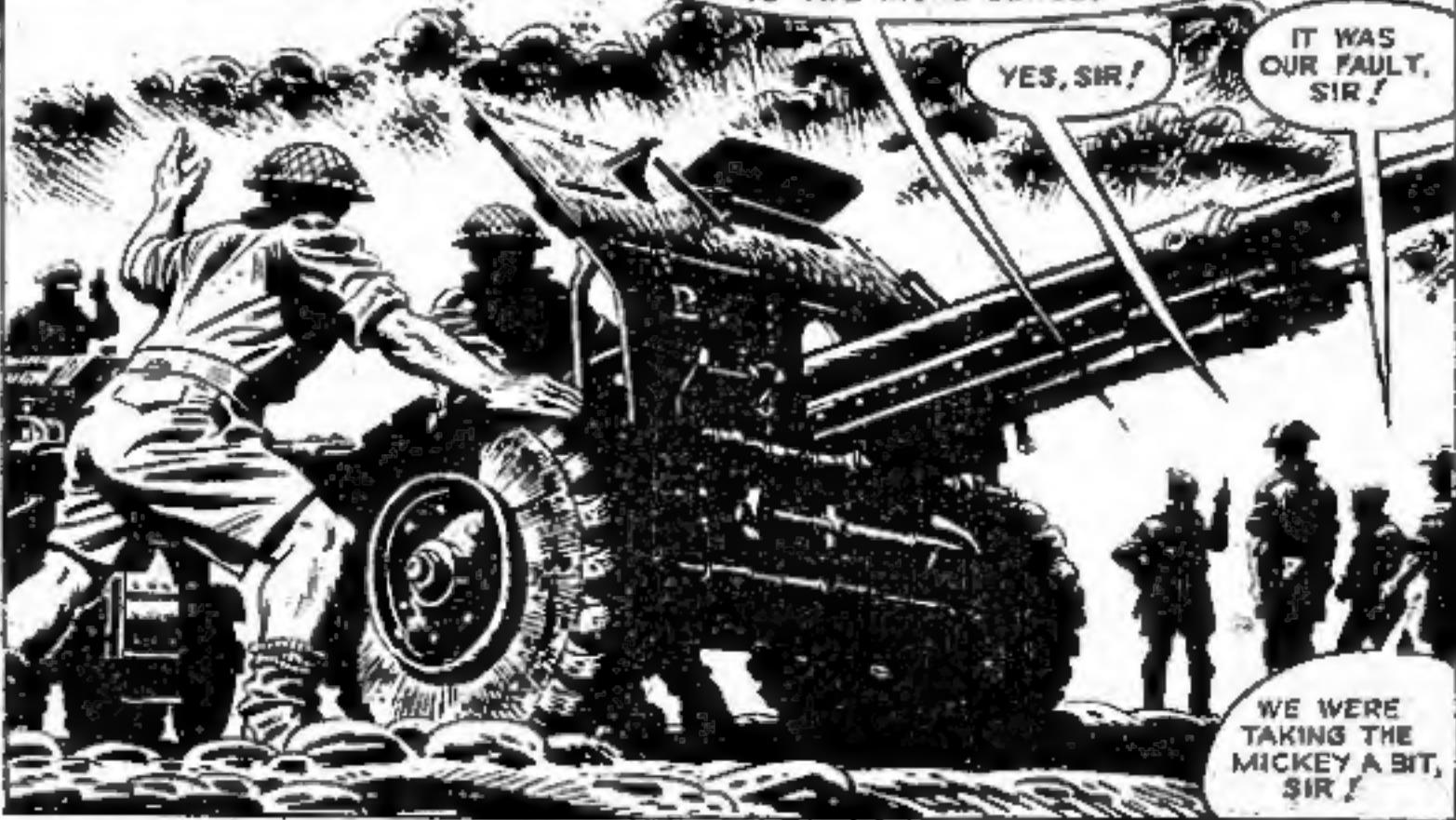
THERE WAS A ROAR LIKE AN ANGRY BULL AS THE SERGEANT-MAJOR CAME STRIDING OVER . . .

WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU PLAYING AT? THERE'S A WAR ON OUT HERE . . . IT'S NOT SOME O.T.C. RAG, I'D EXPECT AN N.C.O. TO 'AVE MORE SENSE!

IT WAS OUR FAULT, SIR!

YES, SIR!

WE WERE TAKING THE MICKEY A BIT, SIR!



AS RIDLEY STRODE AWAY, TIM GAZED AFTER HIM WITH BLAZING EYES. TO HIM IT SEEMED THAT THE SERGEANT-MAJOR HAD SEIZED A CHANCE TO HUMILIATE HIM RIGHT FROM THE START.

DON'T WORRY, TIM . . . BILL RIDLEY'S BARK'S A LOT WORSE THAN HIS BITE.

HE'S RIGHT TOO IN A WAY: THIS AIN'T A VERY HEALTHY SPOT TO BE HANGING AROUND IN FOR ANY LONGER THAN WE CAN HELP.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, BOYS . . . AND THANKS FOR TRYING TO COVER UP BUT I RECKON HE'S GOT IT IN FOR ME!



THE GUNNER SPOKE TRUER THAN HE REALISED FOR, EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, THE POWERFUL GLASSES OF AN OFFICER IN A PATROLLING GERMAN ARMOURED VEHICLE WERE BEING TRAINED ON THE SMALL BRITISH FORCE . . .



SOON A POWERFUL FORCE OF HEAVY PANZERS WAS ROLLING RELENTLESSLY TOWARDS THE GUNNERS' POSITION . . .



0 The Voice of the GIs

IT SO HAPPENED THAT HIGH ABOVE THE DESERT, A WELLINGTON BOMBER WAS RETURNING FROM A RAID ON BENGHAZI. IT'S CREW SPOTTED THE GERMAN ARMOUR . . .

HEY! LOOK AT THOSE TANKS! THEY'RE UP TO NO GOOD . . . BETTER TELL THE BROWN JOBS!



AT EIGHTH ARMY H.Q. . .

THE REPORT SAYS TWELVE TANKS ARE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE FLYING COLUMN . . . WE'VE GOT HERE!



THE WARNING OF THE IMMINENT ATTACK WAS FLASHED TO THE FLYING COLUMN . . .

SIGNAL FROM H.Q., SIR . . . PRIORITY IMMEDIATE!

TRUST THEM TO CALL WHEN WE'VE JUST BREWED UP . . . PROBABLY WANT AMMO RETURNS!



BIG PANZER FORCE HEADING  
YOUR WAY . . . LOOKS AS IF  
THEY'RE OUT FOR YOUR  
BLOOD. YOU ARE NOT . . .  
REPEAT **NOT** . . . TO  
ENGAGE THEM. FALL  
BACK IMMEDIATELY!

BUT, SIR WE COULD  
SURELY KNOCK OUT A  
FEW BEFORE . . .

YOU WILL WITHDRAW  
. . . NOW. THAT'S  
AN ORDER!



BY THUNDER! THEY'VE  
GOT US SURROUNDED!

SHALL I  
PREPARE FOR  
ACTION,  
SIR?

RELUCTANTLY THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT  
GAVE THE ORDER TO PULL BACK. BUT  
ALREADY THE HUGE COLUMN OF PANZERS  
HAD SPLIT TO FORM THE JAWS OF A  
**PINCER** . . . AND THE FLYING  
COLUMN WAS BETWEEN THOSE  
STEEL JAWS . . .

YOU  
BET!



THE SERGEANT-MAJOR RACED BACK  
TO THE GUN-TOWERS . . .

HALT . . .  
ACTION  
FRONT  
TANKS!



THERE WAS NO TIME TO PREPARE DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.  
AS THE GUNNERS UNLIMBERED THEIR GUNS, THE FIRST  
TANKS LUMBERED OVER THE CREST, SPITTING  
WHITE-HOT DEATH.





A DIRECT HIT...  
THE SKIPPER'S  
HAD IT!

SERGEANT-MAJOR BILL RIDLEY'S MOUTH SET LIKE A STEEL TRAP HE AND THE YOUNG OFFICER HAD BEEN TOGETHER SINCE THE START OF THE DESERT CAMPAIGN

THEY'VE KILLED THE SKIPPER, LADS . . . BUT WE'LL MAKE 'EM PAY!

SIX HUNDRED . . . FIVE-FIFTY . . .

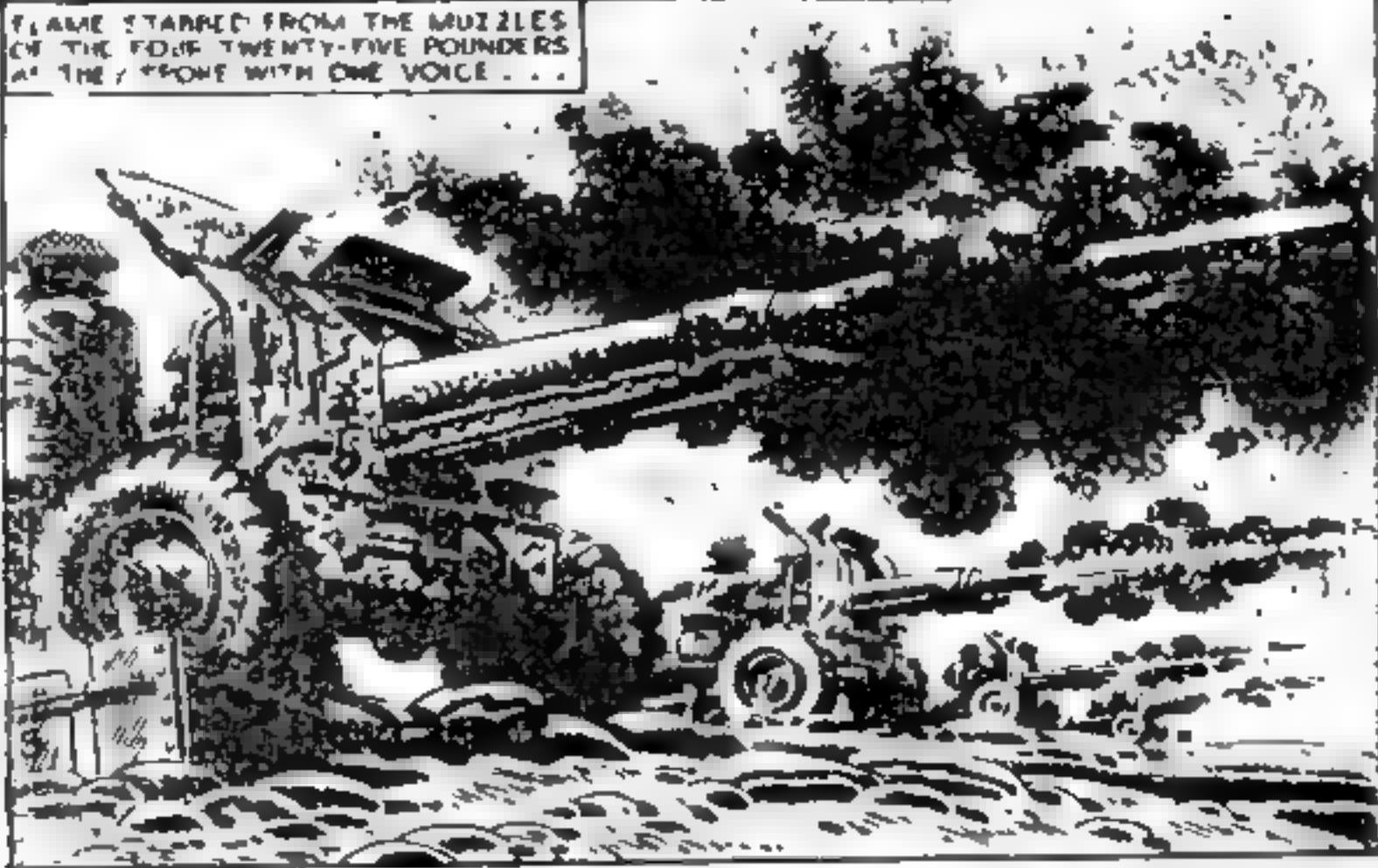


NEARER . . . NEARER THE GERMAN TANKS THUNDERED. THEM . . .

FIRE!



FLAME STARED FROM THE MUZZLES  
OF THE EIGHT TWENTY-FIVE POUNDERS  
AS THEY FROZE WITH ONE VOICE . . .

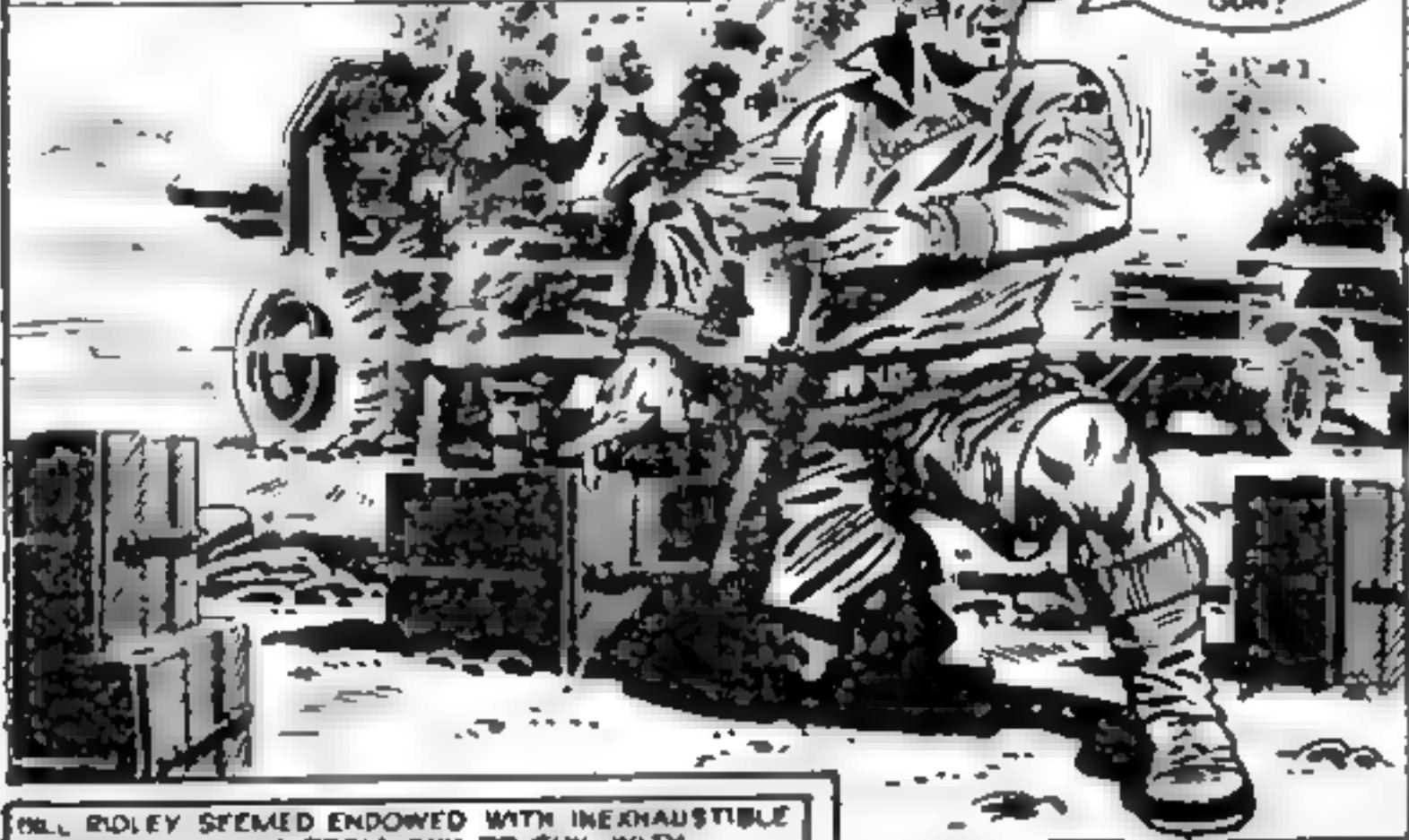


AND THE FIRST FOUR TANKS WERE  
INSTANTLY BLOWN OUT IN SCARLET  
HALLS OF FLAME



THE SWIFT AND DEADLY FIRE OF THE GUNNERS  
WAS TAKING A HEAVY TOLL BUT STILL THE  
GERMAN TANKS ROARED IN . . . AND THE  
GUNNERS WERE PAYING A GRIM PRICE

SANT SMITHERS  
SEND TWO  
OF YOUR MEN TO  
WORK THIS  
GUN!



BILL RIDLEY SEEMED ENDOWED WITH INEXHAUSTIBLE STRENGTH RACING FROM GUN TO GUN WITH AMMUNITION, HELPING THE WOUNDED, DIRECTING FIRE . . . HE WAS EVERYWHERE AT ONCE! BUT SHELLS WERE RUNNING LOW . . .

MAKE THE MOST OF THESE ROUNDS, LEASON-JOYCE . . . IT'S THE LOT! AFTER THAT . . .



EVEN IN THE HEAT AND SMOKE OF BATTLE, THE HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE TWO FLARED AGAIN,

WE'LL FIGHT TO THE LAST ROUND . . . THEN DESTROY THE GUNS AND SURRENDER. YOU GOT ANY BETTER IDEAS?

WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF SMOKE SHELLS LEFT. WE COULD LAY DOWN A SMOKE SCREEN AND PULL OUT UNDER ITS COVER!



## The Voice of the Guns

BILL RIDLEY CURSED HIMSELF INWARDLY FOR FORGETTING THE SMOKE SHELLS EVERY TROOP CARRIED... HE WHEELED AND SKATCHED UP A MAP CASE...

RIGHT! WE'LL LAY DOWN A SMOKE-SCREEN, AND AS SOON AS I GIVE THE ORDER, THREE GUNS WILL PULL OUT. I'M RELYING ON YOU TO LEAD THEM BACK TO BRIGADE POSITION!

WHAT HAPPENS TO NUMBER FOUR GUN?

I'LL STAY WITH IT.  
WE'LL TRY TO KEEP JERRY BUSY WHILE YOU'RE PULLING OUT

SOON A DENSE WALL OF SMOKE LAY BETWEEN THE GUNS AND THE TANKS AND UNDER ITS COVER, THREE OF THE TWENTY-FIVE POUNDERS WERE HASTILY LIMBERED UP.

GOOD LUCK,  
SAR' MAJOR.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR  
GOODBYE KISSES...  
GET TO HELL  
OUT OF IT!



EVERY TANK THAT VENTURED TO GROPE THROUGH THE THICK FALL OF SMOKE WAS A SITTING TARGET FOR THE REMAINING GUN . . .



BUT INEVITABLY THE SMOKE BEGAN TO LIFT AND THE TANKS CLOST'D IN GREEDILY FOR THE KILL



WORKING FRANTICALLY, THEY HITCHED UP THE GUN AND BUMPPING AND SWAYING MADLY, THE QUAD RACED OVER THE SAND CHEATED OF THEIR PREY. THE GERMAN TANKS SENT A FURIOUS SALVO OF HATE AFTER IT . . .



YOU ALL  
RIGHT,  
SAR' MAJOR?

AS CLOUDS OF PAIN-FILLED BLACKNESS CLAMPED DOWN ON BILL RIDLEY'S BRAIN, HE SUMMONED THE LAST RESOURCES OF HIS EDDING STRENGTH TO GASP A HOARSE COMMAND TO THE DRIVER.

LET'S STOP AND FIX A DRESSING ON THAT WOUND, SAR-MAJOR.

KEEP GOING,  
KEEP GOING.  
BEARING SIX-FIVE  
DEGREES! AN ORDER  
...UN RSTAN'.

A FEW HOURS LATER, THE QUAD RACED INTO THE BRITISH FORWARD LINES . . .

THE REST OF YOUR  
MOB CAME THROUGH  
AN HOUR AGO.

GET A STRETCHER  
UP HERE . . .  
DOUBLE QUICK!

MEANWHILE, TIM LEASON-JOYCE REPORTED THE ACTION AT REGIMENTAL HQ.

THE TANKS WERE ABOUT TO OVER-RUN US, WHEN SERGEANT-MAJOR RIDLEY PUT DOWN A SMOKE-SCREEN AND HELD THE JERICIES OFF WITH ONE GUN WHILE WE FOLLED OUT.

JUST WHAT I'D HAVE EXPECTED OF RIDLEY! THE REGIMENT'S LOST A FINE SOLDIER, AND YOU'VE DONE WELL IN YOUR FIRST ACTION, BOMBARDIER!



BUT IT TOOK MORE THAN A SHELL SPLINTER TO KILL A MAN OF BILL RIDLEY'S FIBRE! A WEEK LATER IN THE LUXURY OF THE BASE HOSPITAL IN CAIRO . . .

WHEN CAN I GET UP, SIR?  
I'VE GOT TO GET BACK  
TO MY UNIT!

AS SOON AS  
YOU'RE A BIT STRONGER  
I'VE BROUGHT SOME  
NEWS THAT MIGHT  
HELP!



AS THE RAMC COLONEL READ THE CITATION IN A DELIBERATELY FLAT VOICE, BILL RIDLEY'S HEART MISSED A BEAT

. . . IS AWARDED THE D.C.M AND GRANTED AN IMMEDIATE COMMISSION WITH THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT . . .

ME . . . AN  
OFFICER!



*Chapter 2.***OBSERVATION TEAM**

BILL RIDLEY'S RECOVERY WAS RAPID AND COMPLETE AFTER A SHORT COURSE AT AN OFFICER'S TRAINING UNIT HE REJOINED HIS OLD REGIMENT THE TOUGH REGULAR'S HEART SWILLED WITH PRIDE AS THE COLONEL GREETED HIM BACK . . . AS A BROTHER OFFICER.

DARNED GLAD TO HAVE YOU BACK, BILL. COME ON OVER TO THE MESS FOR A DRINK!

THANK YOU, SIR!



YOU'VE COME BACK JUST AT THE  
RIGHT TIME, BILL! THE WHOLE  
REGIMENT MOVES OFF ON A FLYING  
COLUMN JOB TOMORROW . . .  
TO HIT JERRY WHEREVER WE  
CAN CATCH HIM.

THAT SUITS  
ME, SIR!



I'VE HEARD THAT THE HUN'S BEEN PRETTY ACTIVE ROUND THIS AREA.... WE OUGHT TO GET A BIT OF SHOOTING PRACTICE THERE. I'M GIVING YOU 'F' TROOP, BY THE WAY.



BILL FELT A GLOW OF PRIDE WHEN HE LEARNED THAT HE WAS TO BE GIVEN COMMAND OF A TROOP IMMEDIATELY. BUT HE COULD NOT REPRESS A DISMAYED GASP AT THE COLONEL'S NEXT WORDS.

AS A TROOP COMMANDER YOU'LL BE DOING MAINLY OBSERVATION POST WORK, OF COURSE. 'F' TROOP HAVE GOT QUITE A GOOD O.P. TEAM, I BELIEVE YOU'LL HAVE AN EXCELLENT ASSISTANT . . . BOMBARDIER LEASON-JOYCE!



BILL GROANED INWARDLY. AN OBSERVATION TEAM WAS AS CLOSE-KNIT AS ANY FAMILY, FIGHTING, SLEEPING AND LIVING TOGETHER. AND HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN WAS TO BE THE ONE MAN IN THE ARMY THAT HE COULD NOT STAND!

I'M GOING TO GET A BIT OF SHUT EYE, WE START AT FIRST LIGHT TOMORROW. GOOD LUCK, BILL . . . I'M EXPECTING GREAT THINGS FROM YOU.



AS BILL LEFT THE MESS, HE COLLIDED WITH A HURRYING FIGURE . . .



AS BOMBARDIER TIM LEASON-JOYCE SPRANG TO ATTENTION, BILL MADE A SUPREME EFFORT TO TRY TO BRIDGE THE GAP THAT LAY BETWEEN THEM. HE HELD OUT HIS HAND . . . BUT TIM'S FACE WAS A FROZEN MASK. HE REMAINED RIGIDLY AT ATTENTION.

GLAD YOU GOT OUT OF THE LAST SHOW ALIVE. I'M TAKING OVER F TROOP, SO WE'LL BE IN THE SAME O.P. PARTY.



RIDLEY FLUSHED ANGRILY AS HIS SILENT OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP WAS IGNORED THEN HE SHRUGGED IF THE COCKY YOUNG TKE WANTED TO BE REGIMENTAL . . . THEN SO COULD BILL RIDLEY!

I'LL BE ALONG TO INSPECT EVERYTHING IN HALF AN HOUR . . . AND IT HAD BETTER BE ALL RIGHT!



**EXACTLY THIRTY MINUTES LATER, BILL STRODE OVER TO WHERE THE O.P. TRUCK WAS DRAWN UP. . . .**



BRUDGINGLY BILL ADMITTED TO HIMSELF THAT THERE WAS LITTLE TO CRITICISE ABOUT  
TIM'S PREPARATION OF THE O.P. TRUCK . . . UNTIL HE SWITCHED ON THE  
RADIO!



BILL'S EYES BLAZED WITH GENUINE ANGER. IN A FIGHTING REGIMENT, IT WAS UNFORGIVABLE FOR A RADIO TO BE OFF ITS REGIMENTAL FREQUENCY.

IT SHAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN, SIR!

BOMBARDIER,  
SEE THAT THIS SET  
IS RETUNED... AND  
STAYS ON NET FROM  
NOW. THIS IS A  
WEAPON OF WAR  
NOT A FORCES  
COMFORT!



THE THREE RANKERS STARED IN SILENCE AFTER THEIR NEW COMMANDER AS HE STALKED AWAY . . .

LUMME . . . A COMMISSION SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED HIM . . . HE USED TO BE ONE OF THE BEST!

SORRY ABOUT THE SET, BOMBARDIER!

FORGET IT,  
BADGER AT LEAST IT'S SHOWN  
ME WHERE I STAND WITH OUR NEW SKIPPER!



AT FIRST LIGHT NEXT MORNING, THE REGIMENT PREPARED TO MOVE WESTWARDS IN SEARCH OF ACTION.

WE TRAVEL ON A BEARING OF TWO-EIGHT-FIVE DEGREES, SIR. SHALL I MARK YOUR MAP FOR YOU?

I DIDN'T GO TO WINCHESTER BUT I CAN STILL MARK A COURSE ON A MAP, THANK YOU!



ALL DAY UNDER THE BLAZING SUN, THE COLUMN MOVED DEEP INTO THE DESERT. IN THE OBSERVATION TRUCK OF 'F' TROOP, RIDLEY AND LEASON-JOYCE TRAVELED IN HOSTILE SILENCE.



LATE IN THE AFTERNOON THE RADIO CRACKLED INTO URGENT LIFE . . .

SUNRAY TO  
DOGSTAR  
ORDERS.  
OVER!

DOGSTAR TO  
SUNRAY  
READY  
OVER.

GET  
READY TO  
DECODE!

FIT DECODED THE MESSAGE ALMOST AS  
QUICKLY AS IT CAME THROUGH

WHAT'S THE  
FORM?

F TROOP TO  
DEPLOY SOUTH AND  
TO COVER THE AGHAM  
TRACK SIR ENEMY  
MOVEMENT ALONG IT

WITH A WAVE OF HIS ARM BILL SWUNG 'F' TROOP AWAY FROM THE MAIN BODY SOUTHWARD'S WITH UNERRING JUDGMENT, HE LED THEM ACROSS THE TRACKLESS WASTE THEN, JUST BEFORE NIGHTFALL . . .

RIGHT . . . TELL THE  
GUNS TO DIG IN  
HERE WE'LL HAVE  
OUR Q.P. ON  
THAT HILL . . .  
JEBEL OMAR!

YES, SIR!

HE MAY BE  
AN OAF, BUT HE'S  
A DARNED FINE  
NAVIGATOR!



THANKS TO BILL'S UNCANNILY ACCURATE NAVIGATION, THE JUNS WERE IN POSITION AND THE O.P. ESTABLISHED BEFORE NIGHTFALL.

WE'VE GOT A GOOD VIEW OF THE TRACK FROM HERE. WE'LL MAINTAIN A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR WATCH. COMMUNICATIONS OKAY?

CONTACT  
ESTABLISHED  
SIR.

RIGHT.  
SET A BREW UP  
GOING. I'LL TAKE  
FIRST SHIFT.

DURING THE LONG HOURS OF THE NEXT DAY, THE TRACK WAS UNDER CONSTANT OBSERVATION. BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF LIFE UNTIL LATE AFTERNOON. TIM HAD JUST RELIEVED BILL . . .

A TARGET AT LAST!  
LOOKS AS IF HE'S  
BROKEN DOWN . . . WONDER  
IF I SHOULD CALL  
RIDLEY, OR HAVE A  
GO MYSELF?

FOR A MOMENT, TIM HESITATED. THEN HIS JAW TIGHTENED. HE SEIZED THE FIELD TELEPHONE . . .

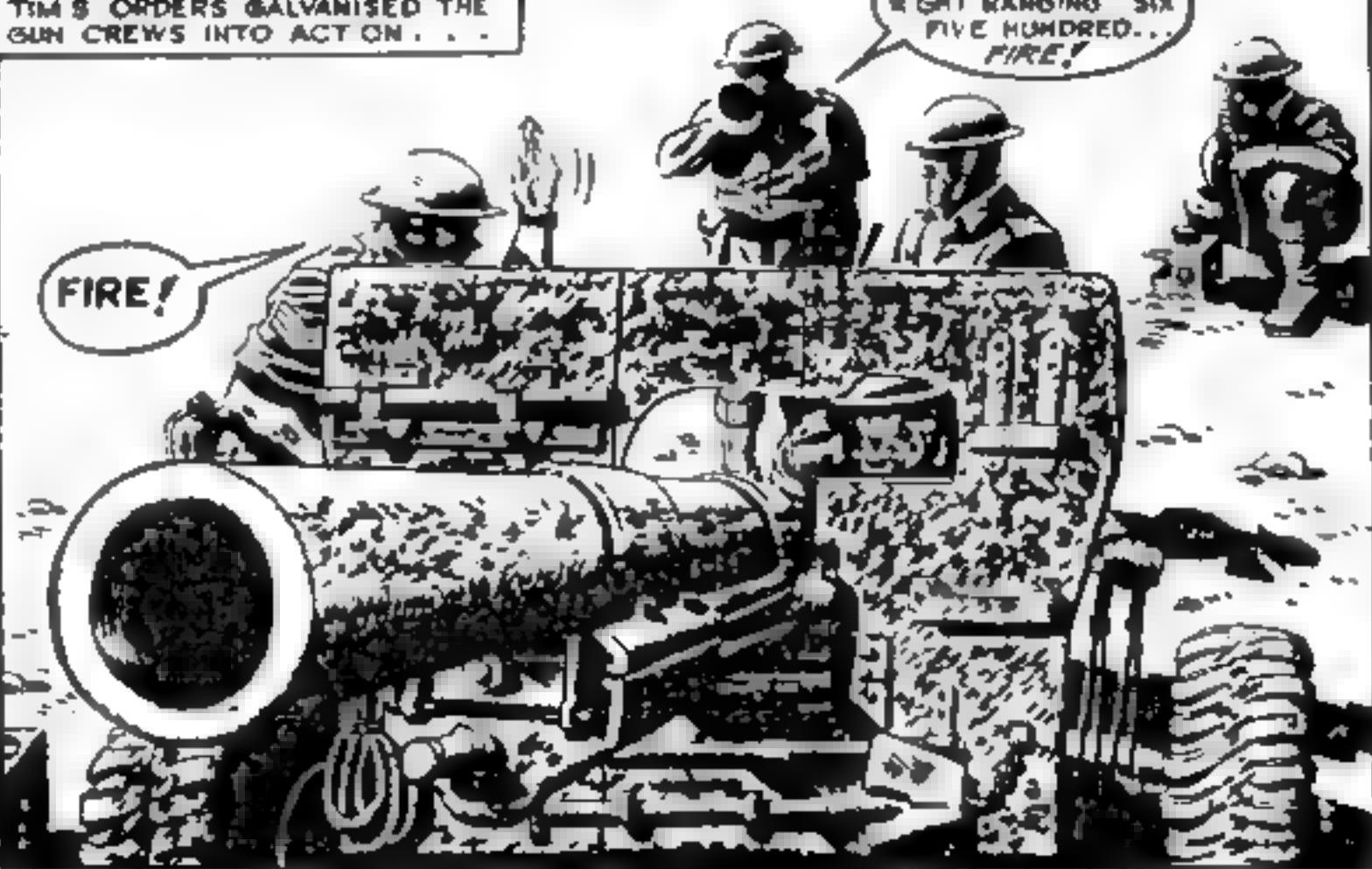
I'LL SHOW HIM  
I CAN TAKE A  
SHOOT AS WELL  
AS HE CAN!

TROOP  
TARGET!

TIM'S ORDERS GALVANISED THE GUN CREWS INTO ACTION . . .

EIGHT RANGING SIX FIVE HUNDRED... FIRE!

FIRE!



TIM'S HEART LEAPED EXULTANTLY AS HIS RANGING SHOTS STRADDLED THE MOTIONLESS TARGET . . .

ONE PLUS, ONE MINUS . . . I'VE GOT THE RANGE NICELY.

SIX-SIX-FIFTY . . . FIVE ROUNDS GUNFIRE!



THE GERMAN TRUCK WAS ALMOST INSTANTLY REDUCED TO A BLAZING WRECK BUT TIM'S SATISFACTION WAS SHORT-LIVED THE TELEPHONE WAS WRENCHED FROM HIS HAND AND HE TURNED TO STARE INTO THE FURIOUS EYES OF BILL RIDLEY . . .

CEASE FIRE!  
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE  
YOU PLAYING AT,  
BOMBARDIER?

SHOOTING  
UP JERRY  
M.T.S.R.  
AS ORDERED!

TIM BRIDLED AT ONCE AT THE  
FURIOUS OUTBURST . . .

SORRY, SIR . . . IF I'D KNOWN YOU  
WANTED TO TAKE THE SHOT  
I'D HAVE CALLED YOU!

IT'S NOT THAT, YOU YOUNG FOOL! YOU'VE WASTED  
TWENTY PRECIOUS ROUNDS ON ONE MISERABLE  
TRUCK THAT WE COULD HAVE STALKED AND PUT  
OUT WITH A BREN! D'YOU THINK AMMO GROWS  
ON TREES AROUND HERE?



THE INCIDENT HELPED TO WIDEN THE RIFT BETWEEN THE TWO. THE EVENING MEAL WAS EATEN IN SICKLY SILENCE AND AN ATTEMPT TO BRIGHTEN THINGS UP BY JACKIE WEST MET WITH NO SUCCESS.



NEXT MORNING TIM WAS EXCITEDLY GREETED BY BADGER GREEN WHO WAS TUNING HIS BELOVED RADIO . . .

LISTEN BOMBARDIER . . . I'VE PICKED UP A JERRY, AND HE AIN'T HALF JABBERIN' AWAY!

'YOU'D BETTER GET ON NET . . . HEY . . . GIVE ME THAT HEADSET,

QUICK!



WATCHED BY THE PUZZLED SIGNALLER, TIM BEGAN SCRIBBLING HURRIEDLY AS HE LISTENED TO THE GUTTURAL GERMAN VOICE.

WHAT IS IT, BOM . . . WHAT'S HE SAYING?

IT'S A MESSAGE FROM A HUN BRIGADE H.Q. . . .  
AND THE CLOTS ARE SENDING IN CLEAR!



TIM'S EYES GLEAMED AS THE MESSAGE TOOK SHAPE. IT WAS AN ORDER TO MOVE . . . AND THE NEW POSITION WAS TO BE ONLY A FEW MILES FROM 'F' TROOP'S GUNS! BREATHLESSLY, HE RACED UP TO WHERE BILL RIDLEY WAS WATCHING THE ROAD . . .

HAVE YOU GONE CRACKERS OR ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL MY LEG? ANYWAY . . . WHERE DID YOU LEARN GERMAN?

WE JUST INTERCEPTED THIS MESSAGE, SIR AND I LEARNED GERMAN AT WINCHESTER!



FOR A LONG MINUTE, RIDLEY WEIGHED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MESSAGE...

IT'S ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! PROBABLY A TRAP. . . YET IT COULD BE SOME FOOL SIGNALLER WHO FORGOT TO PUT THE ORDER INTO CODE. NOT ALL THE MUGS ARE ON OUR SIDE.



THE OFFICER SWIFTLY MADE UP HIS MIND.

RIGHT . . . THIS IS BIG ENOUGH TO CALL THE WHOLE REGIMENT ON BUT IF IT ISN'T THE REAL MCCOY - - - YOU'LL BE SORRY!



# The Voice of the Guns

THE MOMENT THE MESSAGE WAS PASSED BACK TO THE REGIMENT, 'F' TROOP OBSERVATION TRUCK NOSED FORWARD IN SEARCH OF THE ENEMY . . .

THIS IS THE AREA . . . AND NOT A JERRY IN SIGHT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE BEEN HAD . . . AND I'M THE BIGGEST FOOL FOR TAKING NOTICE OF YOU, BOMBARDIER!



SUDDENLY, TIM POINTED TO THE HORIZON . . .

LOOK, SIR . . . THAT DUST-CLOUD ON THE SKYLINE!

HMM . . . COULD BE DUST FROM TRANSPORT . . . OR A SANDSTORM! WE'LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!



BILL HALTED THE TRUCK FOR A MOMENT . . . AND THE DESERT AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE SULLEN ROAR OF ENGINES . . .

LISTEN TO THAT . . . JERRY TRUCKS . . . HUNDREDS OF 'EM! AND THEY'RE NOT COMING ANY NEARER . . . THEY'RE PROBABLY LEAGUERING UP!

THE REGIMENT SHOULD BE IN RANGE IN ABOUT AN HOUR!



THE BRITISH TRUCK PULLED INTO A WADI JUST BELOW THE CREST OF A RISING SLOPE OF SAND AND SUN-BLEACHED BOULDERS.

GOT THAT EIGHTEEN SET, BOMBARDIER . . . WE'LL TAKE A LOOK OVER THE CREST. WEST GREEN . . . GET THE BREM DOWN IN CASE ANY NOSY SCOUT CAR COMES ROUND THIS WAY.



## The Voice of the Guns

THE TWO MEN CAUTIOUSLY CLAMBERED TO THE TOP OF THE SLOPE AND PEERED OVER THE EDGE. THE SHALLOW DEPRESSION ON THE OTHER SIDE WAS SEETHING WITH GERMAN TRUCKS!



NOT YET. - WE'LL HOLD IT TILL ALL THE PATS ARE IN THE TRAP!



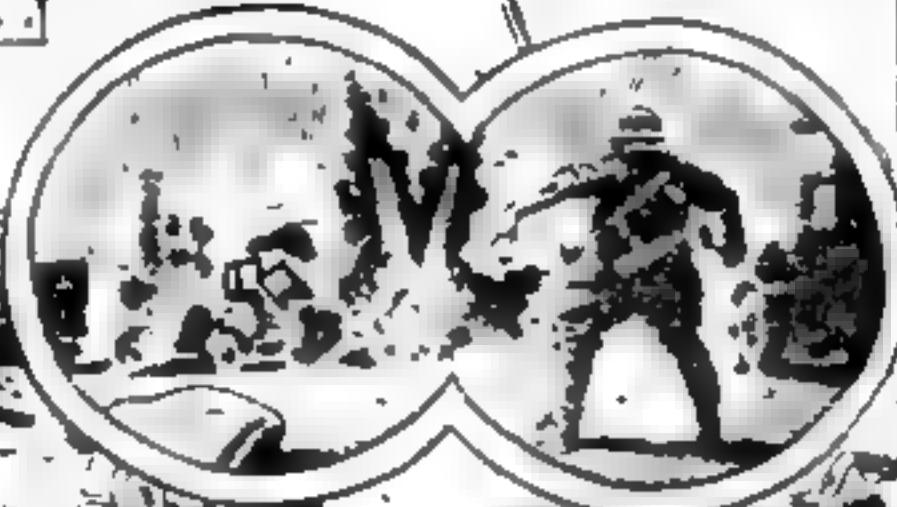
THE STREAM OF INCOMING VEHICLES BEGAN TO THIN OUT. . . THEN BILL'S VOICE CRACKED THE ORDER LIKE A WHIPLASH . . .



THIS RANGING SHOT WAS ENOUGH . . .

RIGHT  
ON  
TARGET!

5TH 32475  
3 INCHES THAT'S  
OK FOR A  
START!



TENSELY THE TWO ARTILLERYMEN WAITED. ALREADY SOMETHING LIKE PANIC HAD BEGUN TO GRIP THE GERMANS IN THE LEAGUE THEM IN THE DISTANCE. THE REGIMENT'S TWENTY FOUR OUNS PULLED OUT LIKE THUNDER THERE WAS A SIGHING MOAN AS THE SHELLS SPED BY HEAD AND ALMOST INSTANTLY, THE ENEMY POSITION ERUPTED INTO AN HUFFING OF VIOLENT EXPLOSIONS.



THE ACRID SMOKE FROM THE FIRST SALVO CLEARED TO REVEAL A SCENE OF FRANTIC CONFUSION. THE GERMANS WERE RACING BLINDLY FOR UNDAMAGED TRUCKS, INTENT ONLY ON ONE THING . . . ESCAPE FROM THE VALLEY OF DEATH

WAIT, HANS,  
WAIT FOR  
ME!

HALT, YOU  
COWARDLY SWINE  
... HALT!

THAT TRUCK'S  
FULL OF AMMUNITION  
... I'M NOT WAITING TO BE  
BLOWN TO PIECES!

THE AMMUNITION TRUCK  
EXPLODED WITH AN EARTH-  
SHAKING ROAR. GRIMLY BILL  
WATCHED THE HOLOCAUST . . .  
THEN RAPPED OUT ANOTHER  
ORDER. A GASP OF HORROR  
BROKE FROM HIM . . .

TEN ROUNDS  
GUNFIRE!

YOU CAN'T  
. . . IT'S  
MURDER . . .  
SHEER MURDER!

THE REGULAR TURNED SAVAGELY  
ON THE YOUNG BOMBARDIER . . .

DO YOU THINK I  
ENJOY THIS, YOU FOOL?  
BUT THIS IS WAR  
NOT A CRICKET MATCH!  
**SEND THAT  
ORDER!**



HESITANTLY, TIM BEGAN TO TRANSMIT THE ORDER . . . THEN HE BROKE OFF, STRUCK  
BY A SUDDEN IDEA . . .

LOOK, SIR . . . WE KNOW THE JERRY'S RADIO  
FREQUENCY. I CAN SPEAK GERMAN . . .  
CAN'T WE GIVE 'EM  
A CHANCE TO  
SURRENDER?



HMM! WE COULD TRY IT.  
I SUPPOSE . . . BUT I DON'T  
RECKON IT'LL BE ANY USE.

# The Voice of the Guns

TIM SWIFTLY TUNED HIS RADIO TO THE ENEMY WAVELENGTH AND PASSED THE ORDER TO SURRENDER FOR LONG MINUTES THEY WAITED FOR A REPLY, AND BILL'S LIPS TWISTED IN A BITTER GRIN . . .

SO MUCH FOR YOUR IDEA!  
YOU CAN'T FIGHT A  
WAR WITH KID  
GLOVES ON.

LOOK, OVER  
THERE'S A WHITE  
FLAG!



IN OBEDIENCE TO FURTHER ORDERS OVER THE WIRES\*, THE UNWOUNDED GERMANS LAID DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND THE BRITISH OFFICER AND THE BOMBARDIER STRODE FORWARD TO TAKE THE SURRENTER OF A COMPLETE BRIGADE.

SORRY  
IF MY IDEAS  
SPOILED  
YOUR FUN,  
SIR?

LISTEN, YOU SMART-ALEC PUPPY . . . I'VE  
HAD ABOUT ALL I CAN TAKE FROM YOU!  
AS SOON AS WE'VE CLEARED THIS  
LOT WE'LL TAKE OFF OUR TUNICS  
AND RANK BADGES AND HAVE  
IT OUT, MAN TO MAN!

THERE'S  
NOTHING I'D  
LIKE BETTER  
SIR!



# The Voice of the Guns

37

BUT THE TWO MEN SOON FOUND THEMSELVES WITH SOMETHING MORE  
IMPORTANT TO THINK ABOUT THAN THEIR PRIVATE QUARREL.

A JOLLY GOOD BAG FOR OUR LAST  
ACTION IN LIBYA, RIDLEY . . . A  
COMPLETE HUN BRIGADE!

LAST ACTION IN LIBYA . . . WHAT  
DO YOU MEAN COLONEL?



IT SEEMS MUSSOLINI HAS BITTEN OFF MORE  
THAN HE CAN CHEW IN GREECE . . . SO HE'S  
CALLED ON HITLER FOR HELP. THE GERMANS  
ARE POURING IN FROM THE NORTH  
**AND WE'RE GOING TO  
STOP THEM! WE PULL BACK  
TO THE DELTA TOMORROW!**



## Chapter 3. ONE MUST DIE

THE GUNNERS HANDED OVER THEIR PRISONERS AND MOVED BACK TO THE NILE DELTA AREA. THERE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES PART OF A MIXED FORCE. ANZAC, BRITISH, INDIAN . . . THAT WAS TO RUSH TO THE AID OF A STRICKEN ALLY GALLANT PROVED WARRIOR . . . BUT PATHETICALLY FEW IN NUMBERS!

WHAT A WAR! STRAIGHT FROM THE DESERT ON TO A SHIP. . . NOT ONE BLOOMIN' NIGHT N ALEX!

WHAT'S EATING YA, SPORT? IN PEACE-TIME, JOKERS PAY FOR A CRUISE TO GREECE!



AS BILL RIDLEY WAS SUPERVISING THE LOADING ON BOARD OF THE GUNS, HE FELT A TAP ON HIS SHOULDER . . .

LOOK LIVELY WITH THAT GUN . . .

I SAY, LADDIE,  
WHERE CAN I  
FIND 'F'TROOP  
COMMANDER?



BILL SWUNG ROUND AND STARED IN AMAZEMENT. - THE NEWCOMER WAS ARMED TO THE TEETH.

I'M IN COMMAND -  
Lemme, you going to tackle  
the whole German Army  
single-handed?



CLIFFE'S THE NAME, LADDIE  
... LIEUTENANT IAN CLIFFE. BEEN POSTED  
TO 'F' TROOP AS GUN POSITION OFFICER.  
THINK WE SHALL GET ANY HAND-TO-  
HAND FIGHTING? THAT'S WHY I  
VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS SHOW!

THE HARD-BITTEN VETERAN EYED CLIFFE  
SARDONICALLY. HE HAD MET SELF-STYLED  
'DEATH-OR GLORY' TYPES BEFORE!

GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US, CLIFFE.  
BUT YOU'LL BE A DARNED SIGHT MORE  
USE TO ME IF YOU CONCENTRATE ON  
KEEPING THE GUNS IN ACTION . . .  
AND FORGET ABOUT  
WINNING A V.C.!



FOR THREE DAYS THE TROOPSHIP STEAMED UNMOLESTED  
ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN. BUT WITH EACH TURN OF  
THE SHIPS' SCREWS, THE COMING VIOLENT CONFLICT  
LOOMED LARGER IN THE MIND OF EVERY MAN IN



40 The Voice of the Gun

THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE RECEIVED A DELIRIOUS WELCOME IN  
ATHENS

ZITO INGLISHKA! DEATH  
TO ZE INVADER! ZITO!

ORIA  
INGL'SKA.  
S'AGHADPO!

ER... THANK YOU,  
MISS. WHAT'S SHE  
SAYING, BOMBARDIER?

HANDSOME  
ENGL SMAILAN  
I LOVE YOU S E?

BUT THE DELIGHTS OF ATHENS WERE  
SHORT-LIVED. A FEW DAYS LATER,  
THE GUNNERS FOUND THEMSELVES FIGHTING  
A BITTER HOPELESS BATTLE IN THE  
MOUNTAINS OF GREECE.

ON  
TARGET!

BUT FOR EVERY ONE WE  
KNOCK OUT, TWO MORE  
COME IN AND I RECKON  
THEY'VE GOT MORE  
TANKS THAN WE'VE  
GOT SHELLS!

FROM AN OBSERVATION POST HIGH IN THE MOUNTAINS BILL RIDLEY AND TIM LEASON-JOYCE DIRECTED THE FIRE OF THE GUNS, AND WATCHED BITTERLY AS THE GERMAN BLITZKRIES MOVED RELENTLESSLY FORWARD.



THE WHOLE AREA'S SWARMING WITH GERMANS... AND WE'RE LIMITED TO TEN ROUNDS PER DAY! WHAT CAN WE DO WITH TEN ROUNDS?

LOOK, SIR... THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF GOING DOWN THAT TRACK WHERE IT WINDS OUT OF OUR VIEW... BUT NOTHING COMES OUT AT THE OTHER END! THERE MUST BE A PRETTY BIG CONCENTRATION DOWN THERE! PERHAPS WE COULD...



YOU TRYING TO TEACH ME MY JOB AGAIN, BOMBARDIER? I'D NOTICED IT, ALL RIGHT... I'M GOING TO PUT OUT A FORWARD OBSERVATION POST AFTER DARK TONIGHT.

TIM STARED HOTLY AT HIS OFFICER. HE HAD NEVER REALISED IT WAS POSSIBLE TO HATE AND YET ADMIRE A MAN SO MUCH!



COMMAND POST... I WANT AN OFFICER SENT UP FOR FORWARD OBSERVATION... OF COURSE I WANT HIM RIGHT AWAY!

THE BULLYING OAF  
HOW WAS I TO KNOW HE'D ALREADY SPOTTED IT!

JUST BEFORE DARK, THE SCRAPE OF BOOTS ON THE BOULDER-STREWN MOUNTAIN SLOPE ANNOUNCED THE APPROACH OF THE OFFICER BILL HAD REQUESTED. BILL'S JAW DROPPED WHEN HE SAW WHO IT WAS!

F.O. REPORTING,  
SIR! I VOLUNTEERED  
FOR THIS . . .  
SOUNDED JUST  
MY CUP OF TEA!

MM . . . I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.  
WELL, HERE'S THE FORM. AS  
SOON AS IT'S DARK, YOU  
GO FORWARD . . .



AS BILL EXPLAINED THE JOB, CLIFFE'S FACE GREW SLIGHTLY PALE. HE MUST APPROACH TO THE VERY EDGE OF THE GERMAN POSITION . . . AND ORDER GUNFIRE WHEN THE SLIGHTEST MISCALCULATION COULD BRING THE SHELLS CRASHING DOWN ON HIMSELF.

IS THAT CLEAR, CLIFFE?  
REMEMBER, THE FIRE-ORDERS  
YOU GIVE MIGHT MEAN THE  
SMASHING OF THE GERMAN  
ADVANCE ON THIS FRONT!  
GOOD LUCK!

ER . . .  
TH . . . THANKS  
VERY MUCH!



CLIFFE STUMBED AWAY INTO THE NIGHT, AND THE OTHERS SETTLED TO WAIT UNEASILY FOR HIS FIRST SIGNAL. AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN AGE, IT CAME . . .

C...CALLING O.P. . . I CAN SEE THE GERMAN POSITION . . . ONLY ABOUT A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY!

THEN START PASSING FIRE-ORDERS, MAN . . . WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



ALONE IN THE DARKNESS, CLIFFE'S BRAVADO DESERTED HIM . . . AND HE BROKE COMPLETELY.

IT'S NO GOOD, RIDLEY . . .  
I CAN'T DO IT . . .  
I CAN'T DO IT!

WITH A SNARL OF DISGUST, RIDLEY THREW DOWN THE HEADSET FEAR HE COULD UNDERSTAND . . . BUT BY HIS CODE THIS WAS SHAMEFUL COWARDICE.

OUR POT-HUNTING HERO'S LOST HIS NERVES! I'M GOING OUT TO GET HIM IN . . . YOU'D BETTER COME WITH ME AND MAN THE FORWARD O.P.



THE TWO MELTED INTO THE DARKNESS ONCE MORE. TIM FOUND HIS DISLIKE OF RIDLEY SWAMPED BY ADMIRATION OF THE MASTERLY WAY IN WHICH THE REGULAR LOCATED THE WRETCHED CLIFFE . . .



AT TIM'S STEALTHY WHISPER CLIFFE LOST HIS HEAD COMPLETELY, AND LEAPED FROM COVER WITH A GLAD YELL . . .



BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. NEXT MOMENT THE DARKNESS WAS SPLIT BY A BLINDING BEAM OF LIGHT, AND A VIO暴 BURST OF SCHMEISSER FIRE RIPPED OVER THEIR HEADS



WITH CONTEMPTUOUS ARROGANCE, THE GERMAN PATROL DISARMED THE THREE AND PRODDED THEM DOWN THE TRACK . . .

MARCH, PIG.  
SCHNELL!

YOU ENGLISH NEVER  
LEARN! WE SHALL KICK  
YOU OUT OF GREECE  
AS WE KICKED YOU  
OUT OF FRANCE!

BUT YOU'LL  
FIND WE HAVE  
A HABIT OF  
COMING BACK!



AS THEY WERE SHEPHERDED DOWN THE MOUNTAINSIDE, BILL MUTTERED HIS PLAN TO THE OTHERS.

I'M GOING TO STUMBLE BY THIS NEXT ROCK

YOU GO TO HELP ME. THEN  
WE'LL GET STUCK INTO THESE  
ROCKS AND IT'S EVERY  
MAN FOR HIMSELF  
OUCH!

SILENCE  
PIG!



A FEW YARDS FARTHER ON, BILL GAVE A CONVINCING STUMBLE, AND THE OTHER TWO GRABBED HIM . . .

OW! MY ANKLE!

STEADY, SIR!



THE GUARDS CLOSED IN WARILY BUT BILL STRAIGHTENED UP . . . AND EXPLODED INTO ACTION.

NOW!

TAKE THAT!



CLIFFE SNATCHED UP A FALLEN SCHMEISSER AND BOLTED LIKE A SCARED RABBIT FOR THE UNDERGROWTH, LEAVING THE OTHER TWO FIGHTING LIKE TIGERS.



THE NEAREST GERMANS WERE DOWN AND TIM AND BILL PLUNGED OFF THE TRACK AFTER CLIFFE. SUDDENLY . . .



# The Voice of the Guns

BEFORE HE COULD BE PREVENTED, THE HISTERICAL OFFICER HAD FIRED A JURST AT THE GERMANS WHO WERE STRUGGLING TO THEIR FEET.



BUT THE FOOLHARDY CLIFFE'S ACTION HAD DONE THE DAMAGE, AND A QUICK-WITTED GERMAN LOADED A GRENADE TOWARDS THE SPOT WHERE HE HAD SEEN THE GUN FLASHES.



EVEN AS THE STICK GRENADE FELL TOWARDS THE GROUND, TIM THREW HIMSELF HEADLONG.



THEY'RE ONLY STUNNED THANK GOODNESS! BUT THAT PATROL'S COMING . . . AND IF I STAY WITH THEM, I CAN'T DO ANY GOOD!



FROM A NEARBY HOLLOW, TIM GROUNDED HIS TEETH WITH HELPLESS RAGE AS HE SAW THE GERMANS BRUTALLY KICK THE TWO DAZED ENGLISHMEN TO THEIR FEET.

STAND UP, SCUM!

THERE WAS A THIRD ENGLANDER WHERE IS HE?

HE WILL NOT GET FAR!



## The Voice of the Guns

THE TWO LUCKLESS BRITISH OFFICERS WERE DRIVEN TOWARDS THE ENEMY COMMAND POST... AND THE GERMANS WERE TAKING NO CHANCES WITH A SECOND ESCAPE B.D.

WHY ARE WE TAKING THEM BACK? THEY KILLED KLEIDEL . . . LET'S SHOOT THE DOGS NOW!

I'D LIKE NOTHING BETTER . . . BUT IT'S TOO GOOD FOR THEM. THERE'S A GESTAPO SECURITY OFFICER WITH THE COLONEL . . . HE WILL MAKE THEM PAY ALL RIGHT!



THE PRISONERS WERE PRODDED INTO THE KITCHEN OF A FARMHOUSE WHICH WAS THE GERMAN COMMANDANT'S H.Q. A PRUSSIAN-LOOKING COLONEL QUESTIONED THEM . . .

TWO ENGLISH PRISONERS, HERR COLONEL! DURING AN ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE, THEY SHOT ONE OF MY MEN - IN COLD BLOOD!

SO! WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY?

IT'S THE DUTY OF EVERY PRISONER TO ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE SIR!



THE COLONEL'S COLD GREY EYES RAKED BILL RIDLEY CONTEMPTUOUSLY.

AND TO MURDER HIS GUARDS? IS THAT PART OF THE ENGLISH SOLDIER'S DUTY?

BILL BIT HIS LIP FOR HE KNEW THAT THE SHOOTING, IF NOT IN COLD BLOOD HAD BEEN COMPLETELY NEEDLESS. THEN, AT THE COLONEL'S NEXT WORDS, HIS EYES WIDENED . . .

EVEN IF YOU HAD SUCCEEDED IN ESCAPING, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR A FEW DAYS ONLY! FOR THE WHOLE BRITISH ARMY WILL BE PRISONERS SOON.



WITH ARROGANT SELF-CONFIDENCE, THE GERMAN HAD NO HESITATION IN TELLING THE TWO PRISONERS OF THE FATE THAT AWAITED THE BRITISH ARMY.

WHY DO YOU THINK WE HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATING IN THIS AREA? WHILE THE BRITISH ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES HERE, WE SHALL THRUST DOWN THROUGH THE NEXT VALLEY AND SURROUND THEM COMPLETELY.

GOOD GRIEF!  
THEY COULD DO  
IT, TOO!



THE GESTAPO SECURITY OFFICER STEPPED FORWARD WITH INSOLENT AUTHORITY . . .

I THINK WE CAN DISPENSE WITH THE LECTURE ON MILITARY STRATEGY, HERR COLONEL. IF A MERE GESTAPO OFFICIAL MAY INTRUDE, I SUGGEST YOU HAVE THESE TWO SHOT AT ONCE!



THE GESTAPO MAN'S FACE DARKENED AT THE SNUB BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO EXTRACT SOME SADISTIC PLEASURE FROM THE PRISONERS

ONLY ONE OF THEM COMMITTED THE MURDER . . . SO ONLY ONE OF THEM SHALL PAY FOR IT!

AH, YES . . . IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO FIND OUT WHICH OF THEM IT WAS. I WILL CONDUCT THE QUESTIONING!

"WHAT I HAVE AN IDEA. THE STUPID ENGLANDERS WILL NEVER BETRAY EACH OTHER, OF COURSE. SO WE WILL LET THE TWO PRISONERS DECIDE WHICH OF THEM IS TO DIE AT DAWN! THEY SHOULD HAVE A MOST ENJOYABLE NIGHT! ANY OBJECTION, HERR COLONEL?"



THE TWO PRISONERS WERE THRUST INTO A TINY, THICK-WALLED ROOM AS HE LEFT. THE GESTAPO MAN THREW THEM A PARTING SNEER.

"IF YOU CANNOT PERSUADE THE MURDERER TO ADMIT HIS GUILT, I SUGGEST YOU TOSS FOR IT SLEEP WELL, GENTLEMEN!"



WITH THE MOCKING LAUGHTER OF THE GESTAPO MAN RINGING IN THEIR EARS, RIDLEY AND CLIFFE STARED AT EACH OTHER BLANKLY.

"WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE CURTAINS FOR ONE OF US, CHUM! QUESTION IS, WHO'S IT GOING TO BE?"



MYSTERICALLY, CLIFFE CLUTCHED AT THE LAPELS OF BILL'S BATTLE DRESS . . .

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING . . . THAT IT'S ALL  
MY FAULT AND I'LL HAVE TO DIE! BUT I  
WON'T DIE! TELL YOU  
. . . I WON'T!

GET A GRIP OF  
YOURSELF, CLIFFE,  
FOR PITY'S SAKE!



BILL SHOOK THE YOUNG OFFICER AS IF HE WERE  
A CHILD AND CLIFFE COLLAPSED ON TO THE  
BENCH, HIS SHOULDERS HEAVING WITH SHUDDERING  
SOBS . . .

OF COURSE IT'S ALL  
YOUR FAULT. BUT  
THERE'S MORE TO  
IT THAN THAT . . .



THERE WAS PITY IN BILL'S EYES AS HE GROPED FOR THE WORDS WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN TO CLIFFE WHY HE HAD TO DIE.

YOU HEARD WHAT THAT HUN COLONEL SAID ABOUT SURROUNDING THE BRITISH ARMY? WHICHEVER OF US IS LEFT ALIVE HAS SOMEHOW GOT TO ESCAPE . . . AND GET THAT GEN BACK! AND I KNOW YOU AREN'T MAN ENOUGH TO DO IT, CLIFFE!



THE COWARD LEAPED TO HIS FEET, HIS FACE AN AGONISED MASK OF FEAR.

YOU CAN'T SEND ME TO DIE, RIDLEY! I'VE GOT A WIFE AND CHILD . . . AND YOU'RE SINGLE FOR MY FAMILY'S SAKE . . . THINK OF THEM!



IN MENTAL AGONY, RIDLEY WRESTLED WITH THE TOUGHEST PROBLEM A MAN COULD HAVE. HE KNEW IT WAS HIS MILITARY DUTY TO REMAIN ALIVE, ESCAPE AND GET THROUGH THE LINES WITH HIS VITAL NEWS . . . BUT . . .



## Chapter 4

## GUNFIRE TARGET

MEANWHILE TIM LEASON-JOYCE HAD MANAGED TO EVADE HIS HUNTERS.

I SEEM TO HAVE GIVEN THE JERRIES THE SLIP.  
BUT I'M NOT GOING BACK TIL I'VE HAD A CRACK AT FREEING THE OTHERS. THIS GREEK CHAP MAY BE ABLE TO HELP.



THE OLD GREEK PEASANT'S EYES LIT WHEN HE REALISED THAT TIM WAS BRITISH AND HE BLADLY AGREED TO HELP HIM... ANYTHING TO "DIKE AT THE HATED GERMAN INVADER!"

MANY THANKS  
MY FRIEND!



WITH HIS RAPIC SAW, A HAMMON SWEEPS THE BRUSHWOOD ON THE DUNKEY. TIM BOLDLY SET OFF TOWARDS THE GERMAN AREA. WITH HIS HEART MISSED A BEAT AS HE HEARD THE CLICK OF A RIFLE BOLT. TWO HELMETED GERMANS STEPPED FROM THE SHADOWS AT THE ROADSIDE.

JUST WHAT WE NEED FOR THE  
SHARPEST - A LOAD OF  
FIREWOOD!

I AM SORRY, I WAS ORDERED TO  
COLLECT THIS FOR YOUR  
COMMANDANT'S FIRE!

AH JUST  
OUR LUCK ON  
YOUR WAY,  
SCUM!



IN A CLEVE OF OLIVES NEAR THE FARMHOUSE WHICH WAS THE GERMAN HQ, TIM TETHERED THE DUNKEY AND INCHED HIS WAY FORWARD. HE SAW A SENTRY PALING TO AND FRO OUTSIDE A BARRACK IN WHICH - AND INSIDE BY THE FEAKLE GLEAM OF AN OIL LAMP RECOGNISED THE HAGGARD FEATURES OF RIDLEY.

SO THAT'S WHERE THEY  
ARE . . . WAITING FOR A  
FIRING SQUAD, I EXPECT. I'LL  
NEVER BE ABLE TO RUSH THAT  
GUARD ACROSS THE OPEN  
SPACE AND BY THE SOUNDS  
OF IT THE GUARDROOM IS  
JUST AROUND THE  
CORNER.



## The Voice of the Guns

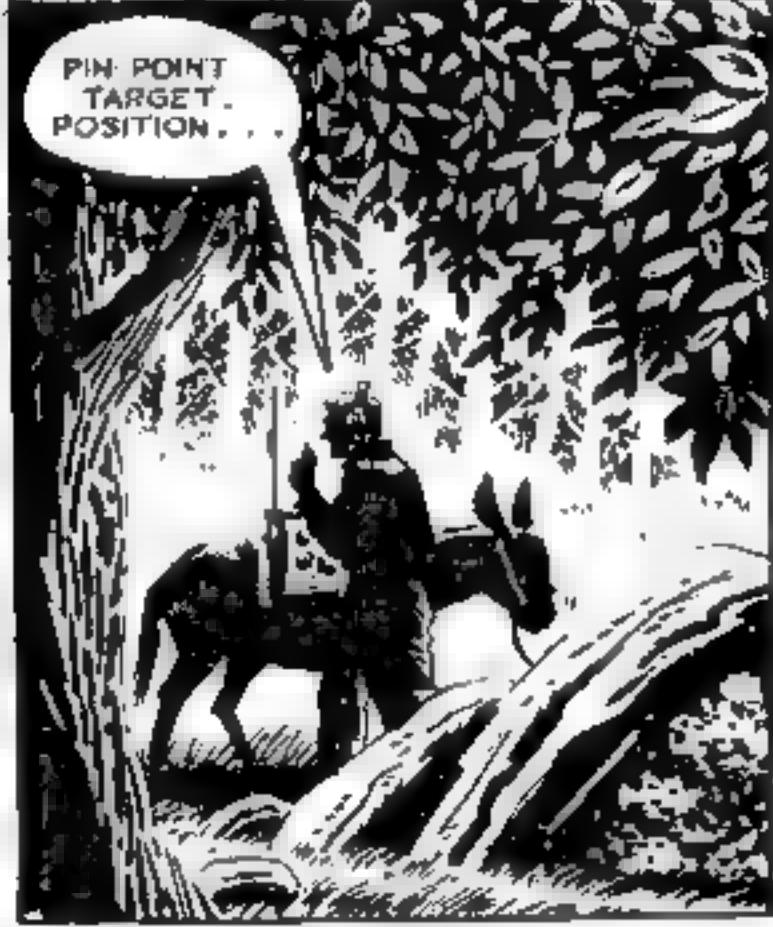
BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON THE BOMBARDIER BEGAN TO PIN-POINT ON HIS MAP THE EXACT POSITION OF THE FARMHOUSE . . .

THERE IS ONLY ONE THING FOR IT! I'LL LAY ON A SHOT FOR A DIRECT HIT ON THE PLACE . . . IT MAY WELL KILL THEM BOTH — BUT IT IS THEIR ONLY CHANCE OF ESCAPE !



HE SWITCHED ON HIS SET AND IN A VOICE THAT WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A WHISPER, BEGAN TO PASS HIS FIRE-ORDERS . . .

PIN-POINT TARGET POSITION . . .



AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN AGE TO TIM, THE LACONIC WORD 'SHOT!' CAME OVER THE AIR. HE WAITED BREATHLESSLY FOR THE SHELL TO LAND UNLESS IT DROPPED REASONABLY CLOSE, HE WOULD HAVE NO MEANS OF CORRECTING THE RANGE. THERE WAS A SHRIEK AND AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR . . .



THE NEXT SHELL CRASHED HOME ON THE FARMHOUSE. THE WALL SEEMED TO HEAVE . . . THEN CRACKED AND FELL. OUT STAGGERED TWO DUST COVERED, CHOKING FIGURES . . .



EVEN AS THE OFFICERS STUMBLED UNBELIEVINGLY TOWARDS HIM, DAZED GERMANS WERE BEGINNING TO APPEAR AMONGST THE RUINS.

LEASOR - JOYCE . . . HOW DID YOU . . .

NO TIME FOR ADVENTURE STORIES SIR... ALL HADES IS GOING TO BREAK LOOSE AT ANY MOMENT, LET'S GO!

THE FIRST SHELLS OF THE SALVO BEGAN TO RAIN DOWN ON THE AREA AS THE THREE BRITONS RACED DESPERATELY FOR FREEDOM.

THAT OUGHT TO KEEP THE JERRIES' HEADS DOWN!

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D ENJOY BEING SHELLED BY ME OWN GUYS!



SUDDENLY THEIR HOPES WERE DASHED. AHEAD, THE ROAD FELL AWAY INTO A STEEP RAVINE ON ONE SIDE WITH AN UNCLIMBABLE CLIFF-FACE ON THE OTHER. AN ARMED SENTRY PACED ALERTLY IN THE ROADWAY.

THAT'S TORN IT... HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET PAST HIM?

LEAVE IT TO ME!



BILL AND TIM LOOKED AT THE YOUNG OFFICER IN SURPRISE. THERE WAS A NEW CONFIDENCE AND STEADINESS IN CLIFFE'S MANNER. GONE WAS THE SWAGGERING BRAVADO . . . GONE, TOO, WAS THE PITIFUL COWARD! IN SOME STRANGE WAY, LIEUTENANT CLIFFE HAD FOUND HIS MANHOOD!

I'VE DONE A BIT OF DEER-STALKING.  
I CAN CREEP ALONG THIS DITCH  
AND TAKE CARE OF HIM!

YE-ES,  
THIS TIME I  
BELIEVE YOU.  
GOOD LUCK,  
CLIFFE!



BREATHLESSLY, THE TWO WATCHED CLIFFE SLITHER SOUNDLESSLY ALONG THE SHALLOW DITCH.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT? WITHOUT TURNING A HAIR . . . AND YET . . .

BEATS ME! YOU  
CAN NEVER TELL  
WHAT MAKES A  
BLOKE TICK!



CLIFFE WAS ONLY TEN FEET FROM THE SENTRY . . . THEN SOME SIXTH SENSE MADE THE GERMAN TURN THE OFFICER LEAPED DESPERATELY BUT THE SENTRY'S FINGER WAS ON THE TRIGGER . . .



HIT IN THE CHEST, CLIFFE HALTED, STAGGERED, AND CAME ON. THE GERMAN FIRED AGAIN . . . BUT STILL CLIFFE LURCHED DOGGEDLY ON ANOTHER YARD ONLY TO FALL AT THE GERMAN'S FEET. GATHERING HIS EBING STRENGTH FOR ONE LAST SUPREME EFFORT, THE YOUNG OFFICER GRABBED AT THE SENTRY'S JACKBOOTS . . .



UNBALANCED, THE SENTRY TOPPLED OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROAD . . . AND THE WAY WAS CLEAR!



HE'S DEAD,  
SIR.

HE WASN'T A  
HERO TILL HE  
STOPPED WANTING  
TO BE ONE'S YET  
HE HAD MORE  
THAN ENOUGH  
COURAGE!

THE TWO MEN ROSE TO THEIR FEET AND STOOD FOR A MOMENT IN SILENT TRIBUTE.  
THEN THEY STARTED ON THE LAST WEARY MILE TO THE BRITISH LINES . . . AND FREEDOM.

HALT, WHO GOES THERE?

FRIEND . . .  
ESCAPED  
P.O.W.'S!

BILL RIDLEY MADE HIS REPORT TO THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER, AND ORDERS WERE HASTILY GIVEN TO COUNTERACT THE GERMAN THREAT.



AS THE BRIGADIER MOVED AWAY, THE REGULAR AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLBOY TURNED TO FACE EACH OTHER. THERE WAS A NEW LIGHT IN THEIR EYES. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY HAD COME TO APPRECIATE EACH OTHER'S WORTH.

REMEMBER IN THE DESERT, WE ARRANGED TO MEET MAN TO MAN? I RECKON WE HAVE, TIM . . . SHAKE!

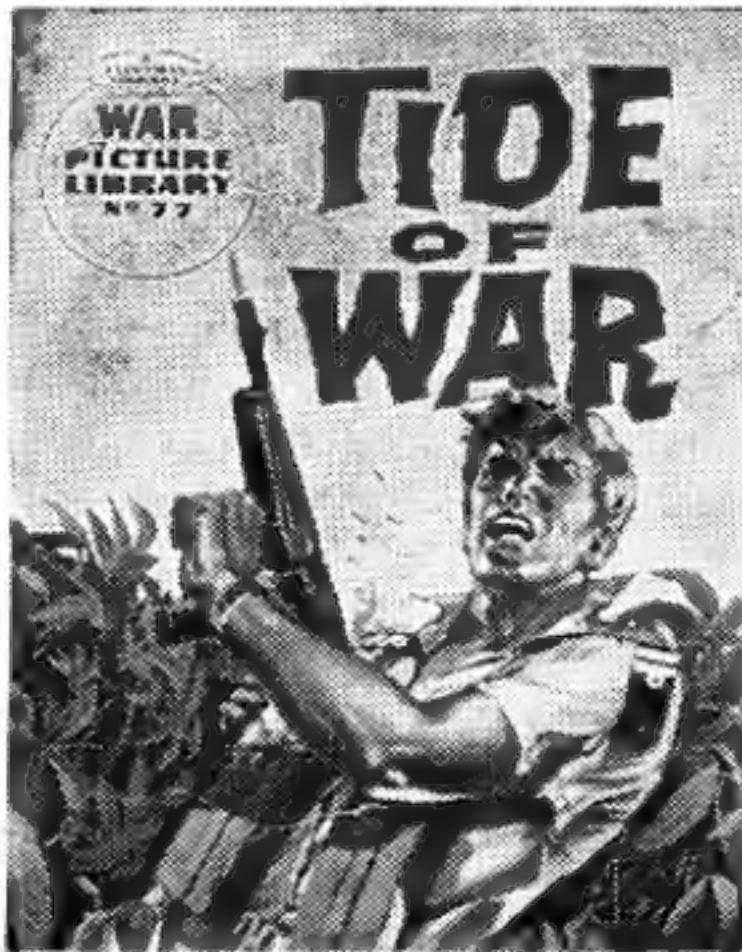
I'M PROUD TO . . . : BILL!



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